

THE SHADOW AND THE LIGHT: A DEFENCE OF DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME, THE MEDIUM by Elizabeth Jenkins. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982. Pp. 275. \$32.50.

Miss Jenkins's book gives us an excellent review of Home's life and adventures in the framework of Victorian England, a review that until now had never been attempted before. And since Miss Jenkins is a distinguished historian of the Victorian era, the book is an excellent biography of the most powerful medium of the last two centuries. Home was as highly gifted in his PK manifestations as he was in his ESP performances. He was one of the very few physical-phenomena mediums whose séances (he conducted probably more than 3,000 sittings) were held in a good light and under conditions that enabled sitters to investigate the phenomena and convince themselves of its truly paranormal character. Home is probably the only medium who was never caught attempting to produce paranormal phenomena by fraudulent means.

In a study of Home's life, two problems may be encountered that are still not fully solved. Miss Jenkins devotes many pages to them in an attempt to cast more light on possible motives that led to the remarkable events in Home's life. The first concerns the intense hatred and fury of Robert Browning (the well-known English poet) toward young Home, beginning only a few days after attending a séance in the neighborhood of London with Home as the medium. It was here that Browning saw a large, white, human hand pick up a wreath and place it on Mrs. Barrett-Browning's head, crowning her as the best poet of the two. Directly after the séance, Browning acknowledged that the phenomena he had experienced at the sitting were quite unexplainable to him. But a few days later, he said that the sitting was nothing but a fraud, and from that time on he condemned Spiritualism and its representatives (e.g., Home) in the strongest terms. He did not even shrink from telling all kinds of lies, culminating in his poem "Mr. Sludge the Medium." Browning's behavior in this matter was never fully explained.

It is Dr. E. J. Dingwall's opinion that Browning was very much afraid that, owing to Spiritualism and its adepts, his wife would return to lesbian contacts. If this is so, why write a poem on fraudulent mediums and on purpose not publish it until after Mrs. Barrett-Browning's death?

The second problem concerning Home's life was the case of *Lyon v. Home* (1867). When Home was poor, with hardly any income, he came in contact with Mrs. Lyon, a very rich lady of outrageous manners and a very bad temper. She insisted on adopting him as her

son and made him change his name, so that instead of Home he now was known as Mr. Lyon. She then made him a gift of £60,000!

Of course, I, who studied Home's life and mediumship during many years, am convinced that Mrs. Lyon treated Home very badly. But to say that Home never made use of his paranormal gifts to make Mrs. Lyon believe that her deceased husband survived and could communicate with her is not quite true. I am not saying that Home did so consciously, but subliminally. Quoting Miss Jenkins, I shall ask the reader to decide for himself.

This meeting took place on 7 October, and Home said that up till then, there had been no psychic manifestations of any kind between them, but as he got up to go, the sounds known as rappings occurred; by the alphabet he translated them into the message: "Do not, my darling Jane, say, alas the light of other days forever fled. The light is with you. Charles lives and loves you." . . . Home said . . . "[these sounds] were not produced by me. I was not near the table when they occurred." But then took place what looks like evidence that the sounds had been the effect of genuine mediumship brought about by Home's presence. Mrs. Lyon went into her bedroom and fetched the tin box, out of which she brought a "bad watercolour sketch of a house." On it was written, in Mrs. Lyon's hand: Alas, the light of other days forever fled, and under this: Binchester. This, she said, had been her husband's favourite house. . . . (p. 186)

According to Miss Jenkins, this event should be regarded as a genuine spirit manifestation. The deceased Mr. Lyon was present and sent a message to his wife by means of Home's mediumship.

I, on the other hand, do not agree with Miss Jenkins's point of view, that is, that the spirit of Mr. Lyon was there in the room, telling his wife that he still loved her, and that by quoting the above sentence gave evidence that his memory was still clear and that he still was able to communicate with her. In my opinion, what happened had nothing to do with a spirit of a deceased person being present. It was Home alone, whose ESP faculties were highly developed, who was responsible for what happened. Practically the same thing happened dozens of times at Home's many séances, convincing the sitters that the deceased were present and communicating with them.

The book contains very interesting chapters on such remarkable phenomena as Home's incombustibility; Home walked about during several minutes with red-hot coals in his hands, bathed his face in the flames of a glowing hearth-fire without the slightest injury, and so on. He also could transfer this immunity to fire to those attending the séance. William Crookes was one of the witnesses to Home's incombustibility.

There is also that remarkable phenomenon of elongating him-

self by more than 10 inches; he also could shrink several inches and appear much smaller. Mention is also made of Home's levitations, "spirit hands," "spirit lights," full-figure materializations, and so forth.

Miss Jenkins so completely exhausts the subject in her book that it will be very difficult for a future investigator of Home's life and phenomena to find anything of some importance to add. On the other hand, it seems to me that there are a few items that should be mentioned, which Miss Jenkins could not know.

When Home at nineteen was kicked out of his aunt's cottage because she believed that he had sold his soul to the devil (a table was suddenly levitated right up to the ceiling!), Home added a second name to his baptismal name Daniel. From then on he called himself Daniel *Dunglas* Home, thereby filling his veins with a quantity of blue blood. The members of the highly aristocratic Scottish family of Home often received the name of Dunglas. When Daniel arrived in England in 1855 and stayed in Cox's hotel in London, he told Mr. Cox that he was an illegitimate son of the Earl of Home. When writing his book, *Incidents in My Life* (it was a ghostwriter who wrote the book), it seems that Home had difficulty in supporting his claim that he was the illegitimate son of the Earl of Home, for it was only by a note consisting of a few words right at the bottom of a page that we hear that it wasn't Home who was the illegitimate son, but his father. In any case, the invented drops of blue blood were very advantageous to Home. Without that invention, Home would never have been able to marry his first wife, the goddaughter of Czar Nicholas I.

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